

**TOWN OF NORTHFIELD, VERMONT**  
**TOWN SELECT BOARD**  
**SPECIAL MEETING**  
**Minutes of December 13, 2018**

- I. ROLL CALL.** Select Board Chair Kenneth W. Goslant, Board members Lynn Doney, Julie H. Goodrich, K. David Maxwell (absent), and Nathaniel Miller. Also present were Town Manager Jeff Schulz, Finance Director Laurie Baroffio, Lawton Rutter (Ambulance Chief), Sally Davidson (Recreation Committee), and Elroy Hill.

Chair Goslant called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

- II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE.** The Board members and the public were asked to rise and recite the Pledge of Allegiance.

- III. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (Scheduled): None.**

**IV. BUDGET WORK SESSION**

- a. Ambulance Service.** Discussion of the Northfield Ambulance Service (NAS) proposed FY 2019-2020 budget began with projected revenue (fees, special detail charges, etc.). Chief Lawton Rutter said predicting the number of annual NAS service calls has become interesting in recent years. The number of service calls has increased each year and now averages about one hundred (100) per month. Finance Director Laurie Baroffio noted not all of these service calls are billable. Chief Rutter acknowledged the average number of billable calls is about sixty-one (61) per month as the number of non-transport callouts and lift assist requests have become more frequent. He has been looking for ways to obtain at least partial reimbursement for this. Chief Rutter said another concern is that a serious emergency might happen elsewhere while his crew members are tied up on a non-emergency. Manager Schulz said since it is difficult to determine the actual amount of billable callouts in the next fiscal year, the anticipated revenue amount will be kept at \$510,000.

Turning to NAS projected expenditures, Chief Rutter said there would be a slight increase (4.5%) in Personnel Services as he will be receiving a scheduled three percent (3%) pay rise. There was a significant increase in the per hour pay for part-time NAS employees last year so that line item will remain the same. There also will be a slight increase in the amounts budgeted for Run Pay and Training Pay in order to reflect actual expenses. Chief Rutter said the Central Vermont Hospital often will contact NAS for non-emergency transports to the UVM Medical Center in Burlington and this can bring in significant revenue. As for contract services, Chief Rutter said dispatching costs have increased significantly in recent years. However, he has looked around and found contracting with Capital Services remains the best option. He added the number of paramedic intercepts has been reduced due to the increased use (when practical) of nitrous oxide for pain management.

Chair Goslant asked if the current outsourcing of NAS billing to Lyndon rescue, Inc. was working out. Ms. Baroffio said there have been some minor issues. This includes Lyndon Rescue not billing for certain items when NAS believes this should be done. There will be a meeting of the two sides soon and it is hoped these and other problems can be sorted out. Chief Rutter said there are other outsourcing options if this dispute cannot be resolved.

In the Administrative budget, Chief Rutter said he had requested a \$1,200 increase in the telephone line item in order to have NAS subscribe to the First Net broadband network, which is available to emergency responders. Having this service would allow for patient information to be shared inbound to the receiving facility through tablets. There are times when this information now has to be sent as a text message from a cell phone. First Net charges a one-time \$10 per device setup fee and then charges \$40 per month per device for unlimited service. Chief Rutter would like to replace the two Toughbooks now in use with up-to-date tablets that would access the First Net system.

He noted First Net also is open to highway employees so there could be cost savings if more municipal cell phones were switched over. There was no objection to Chief Rutter's proposal and the line item for telephone service will be increased from \$2,300 to \$3,500. This new budget amount will include the purchase of two new tablets. Board member Doney asked if the old Toughbooks could be resold. Chief Rutter said he would try.

Chief Rutter has requested an increase in the School/Training budget from \$3,500 to \$4,000 so more NAS responders will be able to take part in programs. He tries to get more long-term residents interested in EMT training because Norwich University students, while valuable NAS assets, only serve for a couple years before they leave the community after graduation. In the Materials/Supplies budget, Chief Rutter has asked for an increase in the Medical Supplies line item from \$18,000 to \$20,000 to cover higher costs. However, most of this expense is reimbursed when the patient is billed. In addition, \$1,500 has been added to the Equipment Purchase line item so a new office computer can be purchased every three (3) years.

The only active account in the NAS Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) is for Building Improvements. Ms. Baroffio explained this account is limited to renovations in the NAS area of the building such as refurbishing the bunkroom, etc. Any project affecting the entire building, including the roof, is in the Town Garage CIP budget. There was no discussion of this account.

In the NAS Capital Equipment Plan (CEP) budget, Chief Rutter began by discussing the need to replace the department's two (2) defibrillators in the near future. They were purchased from ZOLL Medical Corporation and that model is no longer produced and replacement parts will become unavailable before too long. The cost of a new defibrillator is \$36,000 and a good refurbished one will cost \$23,500. Chief Rutter has been applying for grant funds to cover this expense but has been unsuccessful so far. He would like to buy two (2) of the same model at the same time so he doesn't need to purchase separate supplies if they don't use the same output paper, etc. Chief Rutter would like to replace both defibrillators with refurbished ones after the start of the next fiscal year (07/01/19) but would like the Select Board to budget for new ones in case one or more refurbished defibrillators are not available at that time. Ms. Baroffio said the defibrillator account will need to be increased by \$22,500 to cover the cost of two new defibrillators. Chief Rutter said if he can get refurbished defibrillators in July 2019, any excess funds would be set aside for future replacements. Ms. Baroffio said another option was to purchase the refurbished defibrillators during the current fiscal year. This would create a deficit in this account that would be covered when the next fiscal year begins. Board member Goodrich felt this made sense if good refurbished defibrillators are available now. Chief Rutter said there were some in stock when he spoke to the salesman last week. He added this is the type of equipment you cannot be without when it is needed. The Select Board consensus was to authorize the purchase of two (2) refurbished defibrillators during the current fiscal year. Board member Doney asked if the current defibrillators had any resale value. Chief Rutter said they were obsolete in the United States but might have some value overseas.

Chief Rutter said the ambulance units are all in good shape as are the stretchers. The Jaws of Life can be refurbished for \$26,000 and this should add another ten (10) to fifteen (15) years to its service life. A new one would cost about \$50,000 and he will be able to confirm the refurbished one's actual life span after the work has been done. The cost of the refurbishment will be covered in the NAS CEP budget after the new fiscal year begins.

Chief Rutter would like the Select Board to budget sufficient funds to expedite the purchase of PowerLoad systems for the ambulance unit's stretchers. He felt the use of these devices eliminates the threat of back and other injuries to NAS responders. The nationwide obesity crisis has made this a growing concern in recent years. The equipment is not cheap ( $\pm$ \$26,000) but there are financing programs available to spread out payments. In addition, VLCT PACIF has grant funding for ambulance equipment. There are other grant programs but the application process is very competitive. The Select Board members decided to defer any decision on this matter until Chief Rutter can provide more information, including whether less expensive refurbished equipment is available, etc.

Chair Goslant would like Chief Rutter to look into considering additional NAS revenue streams and whether these added funds could be used to finance the purchase of updated equipment. Board member Goodrich noted the Select Board members decided at an earlier budget meeting (12/03/18) to raise the per capita fee charged Roxbury and West Berlin to \$30. Chief Rutter is comfortable with this increase amount but warned against raising the per capita rate too high as there are other ambulance services in the area (i.e., Barre Town EMS) who might become cheaper alternatives. Chair Goslant then thanked Chief Rutter for the valuable information provided this evening.

- b. Grounds/Parks/Facilities & Recreation Committee.** Recreation Committee Chair Sally Davidson said the general operating budget for the Recreation Committee will remain unchanged at \$650 in the next fiscal year. This covers postage, advertising, and department supplies. Ms. Baroffio said the Grounds/Parks/Facilities budget will have an additional \$1,000 in order to cover the expense of "Park Cleanup." She added this budget covered not only the public parks but also the Northfield Common. Chair Goslant would like the local schools to pay more for their use of the ballfields, etc. at Memorial Park and the Northfield Falls Park. He felt organized sports does considerable damage to the grounds. Manager Schulz said this would be among the topics for discussion when he meets with school officials in the near future. In the Grounds/Parks/Facilities CIP budget, there had been some discussion of transferring some funds into the Equipment/Facility Repair account in order to repair and upgrade the ballfield dugouts. Ms. Davidson said the estimated cost is \$6,000 and there was thought of the municipality covering two-thirds of the cost and the local schools paying the balance. Bids for this project will be solicited in the spring. Manager Schulz said this also would be discussed at the same meeting.

Manager Schulz said the installation of new bathrooms at Memorial Park had gone over budget by about \$5,000 and the plan was to cover this overage by transferring funds from the Design Update Parks CIP account and using donation funds. There was no objection. Ms. Davidson said the major project for next summer was to rehabilitate the basketball courts at Memorial Park. Board member Goodrich asked if the courts are much used. Ms. Davidson said they were regularly used by local youth, families, and by a surprising number of Norwich University students. The intention is to replace the backboards, hoops, and posts for a rough estimated cost of \$3,510. There also are plans to reseal and restripe the courts for an additional \$3,000. Ms. Davidson then asked if the Select Board members saw any merit in installing security cameras in the parks to reduce the amount of vandalism, etc. Manager Schulz said this could be done should people think there is need. He estimated the cost of the cameras at about \$500 each. Ms. Davidson said just having the cameras in place could serve as a deterrent. Chair Goslant said the Select Board will look into this. He then thanked Ms. Davidson for her presentation tonight and for her good work throughout the year.

**V. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (Unscheduled).** There was none.

**VI. ADJOURNMENT.** Motion by Board member Miller, seconded by Board member Goodrich, to adjourn. **Motion passed 4-0-0.**

The Board adjourned at 8:25 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

*Kenneth L. McCann*

Kenneth L. McCann, Acting Clerk

An audio recording of this meeting is available in the Town Manager's Office.

These minutes were approved at the regular Select Board meeting of January 8, 2019.